



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

NOV 26 2007

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS

SUBJECT: Opportunity to Vote in the 2008 Primary Elections

Every two years the men and women of our Uniformed Services, and their family members, like all other Americans, are afforded the right to choose our national leaders. With the calendar of primary elections beginning early and stretching through September, 2008, it is important that the Department and the Services be prepared to carry out the voting assistance mission to:

1. Inform and educate U.S. citizens of the right to vote;
2. Foster voting participation; and,
3. Protect the integrity of, and enhance, the electoral process.

For the men and women of our Uniformed Services and their family members, the opportunity to register and cast their ballots in the 2008 elections will depend significantly on the assistance and support they receive from Service and command voting programs and from the Voting Assistance Officers assigned to their units. Those serving overseas, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan, and mobilized National Guard and Reserve units, may face additional challenges to participate due to possible delays in the delivery and return of their absentee ballots through the mails.

Your personal involvement as well as other senior military leaders in supporting the voting assistance mission is essential. During your public appearances and visits to installations, you must emphasize the voting assistance mission and encourage our men and women in uniform to participate in the upcoming elections. I have attached a summary of command responsibilities to be used as guidance in implementing the voting assistance mission.

Remember, voting is both a right and a responsibility of citizens in our country. It is our responsibility, as leaders of the Armed Services, to do everything we can to encourage participation and ensure that our Service members and families are able to exercise their right to vote and have that vote counted.

Attachment:
As stated



OSD 18275-07



11/28/2007 1:51:01 PM

014135

26 NOV 07

19 NOV 07

Command Responsibilities in the Voting Assistance Mission

- Provide support of the voting program at all levels of command. Personal, non-partisan involvement of civilian leadership and military commanders is crucial to effective implementation of the voting program.
- Assign quality personnel the duty of Voting Assistance Officer and comment on their performance as such on their evaluation reports. Voting Assistance Officers must be properly trained and equipped.
- Establish and maintain a directory of major command and installation Voting Assistance Officers and have the means by which to effectively and rapidly communicate with them and their subordinates.
- Publicize the identity and location of Voting Assistance Officers within each major command, on each installation, and within each unit. Service, command, installation and unit websites should maintain prominent voting information links for the benefit of Service members.
- Promote the use of the Federal Voting Assistance Program website, <http://www.fvap.gov>. The website provides election information including dates, state-by-state requirements and access to all required materials.
- Distribute voting materials, including the Federal Post Card Application which serves as a simultaneous voter registration and ballot request and made available to all individuals and their voting age family members. These materials are available in printed form, on CD, and on the Internet at <http://www.fvap.gov>.
- Support electronic voting alternatives at all levels. The Department is working to provide alternatives to the by-mail absentee voting process in addition to those already allowed by many states and localities for the 2008 elections.